

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 PANAMA 01915 221923Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 PA-02 INR-10 SS-15 SP-02
L-03 PM-05 HA-05 /059 W
-----088441 230722Z /14
R 221702Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6224
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

UNCLAS PANAMA 1915

DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO

PANCANAL FOR IO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PN
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

FOLLOWING FROM USIS/PANAMA P 221701Z MAR 78 SENT ACTION USINFO
WASHDC INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA AND SECSTATE WASHDC REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE UNCLAS

E.O. 11652: N/A

MEDIA REACTION

1-PANAMA CITY -- THE MARCH 22 MORNING PRESS FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT
DAY PRODUCED NO SIGNIFICANT COMMENT OR COVERAGE OF THE TREATY
DEBATES.
ONLY ITEM OF SPECIAL INTEREST MARCH 22 IS PANAMA CITY PRESS CON-
FERENCE BY NICARAGUAN PRIEST ERNESTO CARDENAL, WELL-KNOWN LEFTIST
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POET AND SELF-PROCLAIMED MEMBER OF THE FRENTE SANDINISTA. CARDENAL
TOLD THE PRESS YESTERDAY THAT PEDRO JAOQUIN CHAMORRO WAS KILLED
BY GON BECAUSE HE HAD SENT A PERSONAL EMISSARY TO MEXICO TO
ARRANGE AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE SANDINISTAS AND THE GROUP
OF TWELVE. ACCORDING TO CARDENAL, CHAMORRO HIMSELF WAS PLANNING
A TRIP TO MEXICO AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH.

2-CARDENAL ACCUSES THE U.S. OF COMPLICITY IN THE MURDER, CHARGING THAT PRESIDENT CARTER IS GUILTY OF A "COVERUP" BECAUSE SOMOZA KNOWS WHO KILLED CHAMORRO AND IF SOMOZA KNOWS, CARTER KNOWS AND IF HE DOESN'T KNOW IT'S BECAUSE HE HASN'T WANTED TO ASK." CARDENAL, ACCORDING TO THE ACCOUNT IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO, CITES AS "ONE MORE PROOF THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS AFFAIR, THE VERY SIGNIFICANT FACT THAT HIS POLICY TOWARD NICARAGUA HAS SUDDENLY CHANGED SINCE THE DEATH OF CHAMORRO. BEFORE HE WAS AGAINST THE SOMOZA REGIME FOR ITS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. SUDDENLY, SINCE THAT DATE, HE HAS BECOME HIS ALLY; HE HAS DEFENDED HIM PUBLICLY THROUGH HIS STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMEN, AND WORSE YET, HE IS PRESSURING THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS AND OTHERS TO SEARCH OUT AND PREVENT ANTI-SOMOZA ACTIVITIES."

3-THE CARDENAL PRESS CONFERENCE WAS FRONT-PAGED IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO AND CRITICA, IN THE LATTER WITH A PHOTO AND FOLLOWING CAPTION: "ALL OF THE CRIMES OF WATERGATE TOGETHER ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE MURDER OF PEDRO JAOQUIN CHAMORRO WHICH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS COVERING UP." MATUTINO CARRIES THE SPREAD HEAD BOTTOM PAGE ONE: "ERNESTO CARDENAL AFFIRMS: CARTER IS CONCEALER OF CHAMORRO'S MURDERERS."

4-WHILE THE CARDENAL STORY IS MORE BLATANT THAN MOST, AND CARRIES MORE IMPACT BECAUSE OF HIS ORIGIN, HE ONLY ACCUSES OPENLY WHAT SEVERAL PANAMANIAN COMMENTATORS HAVE IMPLIED SINCE CHAMORRO'S UNCLASSIFIED

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DEATH. ITEM UNQUOTE
JORDEN

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NNN

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